

The Brain is Kind of a Big Deal

by Nick Seluk

This humorous and informative book delves into the command center of the human body—the brain—and shows how the brain is like a supercomputer in your body that makes everything else work.

Create Successful Reading Habits

Research from the What Works Clearinghouse suggests that teaching students prefixes and suffixes will help them read and understand the meaning of multisyllabic words.* Knowing how to decode words using prefixes and suffixes supports students in determining the meaning of unknown words. When they can break apart a word, students are better able to learn the word and remember how to read and write it.

* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Practice Guides. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuides>

SCIENCE OF READING – ASSESSMENTS

Assessments measure what children have learned or are able to do. Assessments can be divided into two broad categories: **formal** and **informal** assessments.

Formal assessments are usually standardized; that is, they have been administered to a large sample of different students in a uniform, consistent manner.

- Norm-referenced tests compare students to their peers—how do they compare to other students their age or in the same grade?
- Criterion-referenced tests indicate if students have accomplished certain formalized academic objectives or benchmarks, such as state standards—which learning goals have they met?

Formal assessments are often used for **screening**, **diagnostic**, or **outcome/summative assessment** purposes.

Informal assessments are not standardized but can be used by teachers to make instructional decisions. Some examples of informal assessments include:

- running records
- timed readings
- teacher anecdotal records
- book logs
- informal reading inventories
- phonics surveys
- Informal assessments can be used for **progress monitoring** or **formative purposes**. Teachers use these to decide the next steps for instruction. Teacher-created assessments are also often used as **outcome measures** to determine if students have learned instructional objectives.

WORD WORK – OPEN AND CLOSED SYLLABLES

Help your students look for and identify **open** and **closed syllable** patterns to read longer words.

Decode Multisyllabic Words with Open and Closed Syllables

Say to students, “A syllable is a word or part of a word, pronounced as a unit, and contains.”

A **closed syllable**:

- ends with one or more consonants.
- has a **short vowel** sound that is spelled with one vowel letter.

An **open syllable**:

- ends with a vowel.
- has a **long vowel** sound spelled with one vowel letter.

Display the word **re - sult** (p. 15). Say to students:

- “Let’s practice decoding some words from the text that contain **open** and **closed** syllables.”
- “Look at the word *result*. How many syllables does it have?” (Two)
- “*Result* has two syllables *re - sult*.”
- “Look at the first syllable *re-*. What vowel do we see in this syllable? (*e*)
- “Does the *e* have one or more consonants after it?” (No)
- “Since the *e* is not followed by a consonant, that means this is an **open syllable** and will have a long vowel sound, /ē/. Let’s sound out the syllable, /r/ /ē/.”
- “Remember that the word *result* has two syllables, *re - sult*.”
- “Look at the second syllable, *-sult*. What vowel do we see in this syllable?” (*u*)
- “Does the *u* have one or more consonants after it?” (Yes)
- “Since the *u* is followed by the consonants *lt*, that means this is a **closed syllable** and will have a short vowel sound, /ŭ/. Let’s sound out the syllable /s/ /ŭ/ /l/ /t/.”
- “Let’s blend the syllables together to say the word *result*, /r/ /ē/ /s/ /ŭ/ /l/ /t/.”
- “As we read the book, we’ll read more words together with **open** and **closed syllables**.”

Continue to practice applying this skill by choosing words from the text that follow the open/closed syllable pattern.

ELA.3.F.1.3: Use knowledge of grade-level phonics and word-analysis skills to decode words.

c. Decode multisyllabic words.

ELL and SWD suggestion:

Use magnetic letters or manipulative letter tiles to help students understand that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds. Use only the letters you need for the spelling pattern you are practicing.

TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

Tier 2 vocabulary words can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. When teaching vocabulary, it is important to create and share student-friendly definitions that are appropriate for the level of your students. Help students make connections to the word by providing contextual information that relates to the text being read and builds upon their background knowledge. Here are some examples of Tier 2 vocabulary words from the book:



command (p. 2): If you **command** somebody to do something, you order them to do it. The brain sends **commands** to the entire body and tells it what to do.



complex (p. 4): Something that is **complex** has many different parts, is very detailed, and is hard to understand. Human brains are like supercomputers and can carry out many **complex** tasks at the same time.



avoid (p. 18): If you **avoid** doing something, you choose not to do it, or you take action in order to prevent it from happening. The brain reminds you to **avoid** touching things that are dangerous.



specific (p. 24): If someone is **specific**, they give instructions that are clear and exact. The brain gives **specific** instructions to other parts of the body to tell them what to do.

Extension Activity: Create a vocabulary notebook with students to keep track of all the new vocabulary words they are learning. Students will use the notebook to record each word and draw a picture that represents the word. Teachers can also use the notebook to have students draw synonyms, antonyms, or other important vocabulary features. If you are able, provide a small incentive like a sticker or a classroom shout-out to encourage students to use the word in the correct context in their everyday language.

ELA.K.V.1.1: Use grade-level academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.

ELL and SWD suggestion:

Reinforce students’ understanding of vocabulary by asking them to generate synonyms for the new words they are learning. This allows them to interact with new vocabulary in a meaningful way. Assist ELL students in recognizing cognates in their native language that correspond to the meaning of the word in English.

READ FOR MEANING – TEXT STRUCTURE: CAUSE AND EFFECT

This section will contain activities for reading fluency and/or comprehension with embedded supports for ELL and/or SWD.

ELA.3.R.2.1: Explain how text features contribute to meaning and identify the text structures of chronology, comparison, and cause/effect in texts.

ELA.3.R.3.2: Summarize a text to enhance comprehension.

Before:

Text structure refers to how a text is organized. The book *The Brain is Kind of a Big Deal* uses the text structure **cause and effect** to help students learn about how their brain works.

- The description of what happens is the **effect**.
- The detail(s) related to why it happens is the **cause**.

Use the graphic organizer to help students identify the cause and effect relationship throughout the text.

During:

Use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework in which you explicitly model the strategy, provide guided practice, and then allow students time to practice the skill on their own or in small groups.

- I Do (p. 1 - 7)
- We Do (p. 10 - 20)
- You Do (p. 21 - 26)

- What effect does _____ have on _____?
- Does _____ cause _____?
- Is _____ the cause of _____ or was _____ the cause?
- What is the effect of _____?

Use the following questions to help guide your discussion around the text:

- What causes ____ to happen?
- Tell me what happens when ...
- How does _____ affect _____?

Help students identify cause and effect relationships by looking for the following **signal words**:

- as a result, as such, because of
- cause, consequently, due to
- for this reason, led to, since
- so, reason, result of, therefore, unless

Page	Cause		Effect
1	The brain collects and stores information about everything you experience.	➔	Your brain remembers what to do next time you have that same experience.
5	The brain uses neurons to send messages to your body, telling it what to do.	➔	Your body responds to the neuron by taking action.
7	When you scrape your knee, your brain sends a message to your body through your nerves.	➔	
10	The brain voluntarily and involuntarily tells your body what to do.	➔	Provide an example for each Voluntary: • Involuntary: •
11		➔	You stop eating.
12		➔	
14		➔	
15 - 20	The brain uses the five senses to help figure out information. (p. 15 - 20)	➔	Provide two examples of how the brain using senses affects people: 1. 2.
21	The brain sends messages to your muscles when running.	➔	
22		➔	
23 - 24		➔	
26		➔	

READ FOR MEANING – TEXT STRUCTURE: CAUSE AND EFFECT

After:

- How does understanding the cause and effect relationship between you and your brain help you to better understand how the brain works?
- What is the most interesting thing you learned about the brain? Why?
- Our brains help us respond to all the different experiences we have each day. What are some other examples of how your brain has helped you today?
- **Write a Text Structure Summary.**

Beginning:

- State the central idea of the text (should hint at the cause and effect relationship).
- Example: The brain is a powerful muscle that sends and receives messages to and from the body, telling it what to do.

Middle:

- The middle of the summary should include two to three details from the text and mimic the cause and effect text structure.
- Example: The brain sends many different kinds of messages using neurons. These messages could include telling the body to feel pain if you get hurt or to help you see that an apple is red.

End:

- Students should end the summary with a conclusion that restates the central idea and text structure.

ELL and SWD suggestion:

Help students write a text structure summary by providing sentence stems for them to complete. Sentence stems help students learn the structure of a sentence and build understanding around how to construct sentences when writing. They also help students organize their thoughts in a logical and meaningful way.